

Onassis Remembered as a 'Blessing'

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NEW YORK—In the great marble church of her childhood where she was both baptized and confirmed, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis was remembered Monday as a "blessing" who "made a rare and noble contribution to the American spirit."

"She was a blessing to us and to the nation . . .," Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, her brother-in-law, told 1,000 mourners during a moving eulogy, while outside on Park Avenue, solemn crowds stood six deep. "No one ever gave more meaning to the title of First Lady."

"Jackie was too young to be a widow in 1963 and too young to die now . . .," the senior senator from Massachusetts said, his voice ringing through the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, a landmark Italian Renaissance house of worship.

"During those four endless days in 1963, she held us together as a family and a country. In large part because of her, we could grieve and then go on. She lifted us up and in the doubt and darkness she gave her fellow citizens back their pride as Americans. She was then 34 years old."

With prayer and song and tears and laughter—and more than a modicum of privacy—final good-bys were said to the woman many viewed as an American icon.

Outside, a man held up a small sign, hand lettered with a black pen.

"Camelot will be reunited in heaven," it said.

The mourners included lined faces from the New Frontier such as former Kennedy speech writer Theodore Sorenson, White House aide and historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr., one time Ambassador to India John Kenneth Galbraith, former White House Press Secretary Pierre Salinger, former National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy and former Treasury Secretary C. Douglas Dillon.

First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton attended. So did Lady Bird

Johnson, widow of President Lyndon B. Johnson. She used a cane and held the arm of a Kennedy aide as she moved slowly up the church steps.

There were Kennedy relatives and cousins and nephews and a Hollywood contingent that included actress Daryl Hannah, a friend of John F. Kennedy Jr., and actor Arnold Schwarzenegger and his wife, Maria Shriver. From the Senate came Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York, Claiborne Pell of Rhode Island and John Kerry of Massachusetts.

From the world of New York politics came Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani and his predecessor David N. Dinkins—and there were people Mrs. Onassis' life had touched—her decorator, her colleagues from publishing, her boarding school roommate.

While the body of Mrs. Onassis lay in a closed mahogany casket, decorated with ferns topped by a cross of white and purple lilies-of-the-valley, the people closest to the former First Lady—her two children, John F. Kennedy Jr. and Caroline Kennedy Schlossberg, and her longtime companion Maurice Tempelsman—celebrated her life.

Caroline Schlossberg told mourners that her mother, who died of cancer at the age of 64 on Thursday, kept a book on a special bookshelf in her room. The volume, containing a poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay, was presented as a first prize in literature to Mrs. Onassis while she was a student.

As she read the Millay poem, "Memories of Cape Cod," Caroline Schlossberg's voice cracked with emotion.

"Choosing the readings for these services, we struggled to find ones that captured my mother's essence. Three things came to mind over and over again and ultimately dictated our selections," John Kennedy Jr. told the mourners. "They were her love of words, the bonds of home and family and her spirit of adventure."

Tempelsman read one of Mrs.

Onassis' favorite poems, "Ithaca" by the Greek poet Constantine Cavafy.

"But now the journey is over. Too short, alas too short," he concluded. "It was filled with adventure and wisdom, laughter and love, gallantry and grace. So farewell, farewell."

In a highly emotional moment, Metropolitan Opera star Jessye Norman sang "Ave Maria."

For all the tributes, it was the senior senator from Massachusetts, no stranger to sad eulogies, who perhaps captured Mrs. Onassis best—her political savvy, sense of humor, love for her children and grandchildren, her desire for privacy.

"President Kennedy took such delight in her brilliance and her spirit," he told the mourners. "At a White House dinner, he once leaned over and told the wife of the French ambassador: 'Jackie speaks fluent French. But I only understand one of every five words she says—and that word is De Gaulle.'"

In accordance with Mrs. Onassis' wish for privacy, no television cameras were allowed in the church. Outside on Park Avenue, a crowd of about 4,000 stood behind police barricades.

Police completely closed several blocks of the normally busy four-lane thoroughfare for the funeral.

While the funeral service was under way, photographers converged on an elderly woman and her companion. The woman sat on a chair in the middle of the sidewalk in front of an apartment building across the street from the church.

Her head was lowered in prayer.

"I have been praying for her every day," said Elizabeth Montgomery, who gave her age as 94, and who said she had worked as a maid for the Kennedys many years ago.

"Nobody could be nicer than Jackie," she said. "She was marvelous to everybody. She was beautiful in every way. She was a lady to her fingertips."

Farewell From the Family

The following are from some of the readings at Monday's funeral Mass:

■ "Choosing the readings for these services, we struggled to find ones that captured my mother's essence. Three things came to mind over and over again and ultimately dictated our selections. They were her love of words, the bonds of home and family and her spirit of adventure."

—John F. Kennedy Jr.

■ "She was a blessing to us and to the nation—and a lesson to the world on how to do things right, how to be a mother, how to appreciate history, how to be courageous."

—Sen. Edward M. Kennedy

■ "The wind in the ash tree sounds like surf on the shore at Truro. . . . The winds died down. They said leave your pebbles on the sand and your shells too and come along. We'll find you another beach like the beach at Truro. Let me listen to the wind in the ash, it sounds like surf on the shore."

—Caroline Kennedy Schlossberg,
reading from a poem by Edna St. Vincent
Millay, "Memory of Cape Cod."

HONORARY PALLBEARERS

Edward Kennedy Jr. (son of Sen. Edward M. Kennedy)
Robert F. Kennedy Jr. (son of the late Robert F. Kennedy)
Christopher Lawford (son of Peter and Pat Lawford)
Anthony Radziwill (nephew)
Lewis Rutherford Jr. (nephew)
Timothy Shriver (son of Sargent and Eunice Shriver)
Dr. William Kennedy Smith (son of Jean Kennedy Smith)
Jack Walsh (Secret Service agent who watched Kennedy children)